7. Religion.

The sedentary population of Turkestan as well as the Kazakhs profess themselves to be Sunnite Moslems. But whereas the Kazakhs are really Moslems only in name, the sedentary people, especially the sedentary Uzbeks, have been marked from the beginning by great fanaticism, and probably in this connection they deserve first place among all the followers of Islam. This fanaticism was nurtured primarily by the so-called 'rais' 'duvanas' and 'ishans', of which the first have at present been abolished in the Russian possessions. The 'rais' were officials appointed by the government, whose chief task was to supervise the strict fulfillment of the precepts of the Koran, and to punish those who were indifferent or unconcerned. They were equipped for this purpose with a whip made of a wide, thick leather thong, and a wooden handle, with which they drove together to prayers those who systematically avoided the visits to the mosques. In addition, they mercilessly whipped the tradespeople in the bazaars who were guilty of profiting at the expense of the public through false measures or weights. Also the management of the control of prostitutes was transferred to the rais, and those evildoers caught 'in flagrante' were punished in a truly barbaric fashion. Since the rais were just as corruptible as the other officials, as a rule they called only those people to account who did not have the means to buy themselves off, so that the official activity of the rais appeared to be more of a well organized system of extortion. Since the Russians naturally had no particular interest in nurturing the fanaticism of the population of their Central Asian possessions, which was directed against all those of other creeds, they abolished the office of the rais in the areas under their domination, and they exist at the present time only in the khanates which are still independent. 771 656 661 [548]

/196/ The 'duvanas' are, in Turkestan, what the dervishes or 'kalantars' are in other Moslem lands. The duvanas usually live in a cloistered community and are celibates, although there are also married duvanas. Their number is rather large; at every bazaar and at every fair one meets whole crowds of singing, screeching duvanas, who assess the public for contributions. Their influence and the respect which they enjoy among the people is very great, which has always remained a mystery to me, for one can scarcely imagine a more vulgar, impudent, and repulsive throng than the duvanas. They 792

531 [353] the remote mountain districts of Central Asia the forms have been handed down so carefully that the figure of the bird has retained traces of medieval stylization.

Embroideries discovered by Le Coq in sparsely populated districts of Eastern Turkestan are in technique and design frequently almost identical with the susanis of Bokhara. They show the same stylized flower-patterns in the same combination of colours, usually as decorations of women's trousers (tambal). It may, therefore, be assumed that the style of the susanis is characteristic of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia.

More than twenty years ago Le Coq reported that such embroidery was no longer being made in Eastern Turkestan. The examples that he saw had been made by the mothers of the generation then living. In Western Turkestan the tradition not only exists to this day, but the government has set up special workshops where the women embroider susanis. This is part of the policy by means of which the state seeks to draw women out of the secluded life of the harem.

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